

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 6, 2005

To: Greg Carpenter

From: Mercedes McLemore

Subject: Minutes from October 5, 2005 Community Forum Meeting

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER—7:00 p.m.

I. Introduction of City Staff and Los Cerritos Wetlands Study Group

II. Overview by Ric Trent, Chairman

III. Presentation made by following subgroup leaders:

- A. Last remaining wetlands by Lisa Rinaldi
- B. Environmental by Ann Dennison
- C. Traffic/Circulation by Sonia Pawluczyk
- D. Land Use by Janice Dahl

IV. Public Comments

Ric Trent told the crowd that a recommendation would be included in the final presentation to the City Council and that the study group members wanted to get as much community feedback as possible beforehand. He asked for the visitors feel free to voice their opinions to the group, because that was their opportunity.

The first comment came from a man who said that he probably lives the closest to the wetlands. He had written a 17-page response to the Home Depot EIR, and gave a copy to Janice Dahl. He stated that he is also involved in the "Stop Home Depot" group. He thinks that the increased revenue is the primary consideration for the City, but it should be more concerned with the residents who live close to this project. He also said that the City is going to consider this revenue as the prime reason for allowing this development. He concluded by telling the group that he is willing to increase his taxes \$50 per year to make sure that this kind of thing does not happen in his community, and believes that many residents in University Park would agree.

The next speaker was Blake MacIntosh of Seal Beach. He stated that he represents the many residents who live in his community, which has one way in and one way out. The access is currently very dangerous. He

noticed that none of the impacts to Seal Beach were included in the Study Group's research. He has a 90- year-old neighbor who navigates this trip each day, and even he has difficulty. Mr. MacIntosh believes that the proposed uses would make living in his community unbearable.

Next up was Ben Goldberg, former University Park Estates Neighborhood Association (UPENA) president. He was born and raised in Long Beach, and has two children who grew up here. He stated that he is a concerned resident for the entire East side of town. Although he is normally in favor of good projects, he thinks that the Home Depot project makes absolutely no sense. He asked City Council to improve Loynes Avenue to no avail. Said that Council waited until someone died to fix it, before then there were only temporary patch jobs done. It's not just University Park Estates that is impacted, because everyone who enters Long Beach on 7th St and Studebaker will be negatively impacted by this project as well. He also said that this is not just a NIMBY ("Not In My Back Yard") approach to Home Depot. We all use HD, but adding it to where there was never any real impact to traffic and public safety would be atrocious. Believes Colonna will vote against it, but is very disappointed by other Council members who are not impacted and thereby choose to support it solely for financial gain.

Taryn Olsen, resident of Belmont Heights area spoke next. She said that she was speaking on behalf of many citizens in Long Beach who live here because they like it just the way that it is. She went on to say that if they wanted to live in a crowded beach city they would move elsewhere. They don't want that, and don't want to be in Orange County where there are mini-malls on every corner, although there may be a little bit more open space. She believes that there is no need for a Master Plan because there is no more planning necessary and that the City is already overdeveloped on the east side. Ms. Olsen concluded by saying that the best land is that with nothing on it, the residents do not want to be like rats in a cage due to overcrowding, no change is necessary.

The next speaker was Mike Reed, a member of the Long Beach Marina Advisory Commission and chair of the Facilities Committee. He follows capital improvement projects and such in the area. He became active last year when the developers came to visit his group. He was very questionable of this project for many of the same reasons as the rest of the study group. He said that at the time, developers had completed a preliminary parking study based on the Home Depot proposal. This study was for November, February and June, which seemed strange to him because seasons don't seem like the important factor as much as the time of day. He also finds it interesting that there is no master plan or major EIR linking all the proposed projects together. Access to traffic congestion over the bridge is also an issue because Davies Bridge cannot be

changed. Mr. Reed would like to see this issue discussed in the Traffic study.

Dave Robertson, University Park resident, spoke next. He said that he has been active in recruiting people to come to the meeting. He is incredibly disappointed in the EIR, because he felt that it did not really discuss alternative methods, or add any information about what Home Depot would offer other than money (according to the PR person). He wanted to know how long it would take to develop a master plan, and would it address infrastructure priorities such as streets, sewers, utilities, etc.? Mr. Trent said that he was not sure how long the process would take, but he hopes that what will come out of this committee and whole process is a pure zoning commission to work on the master plan. He went on to say that there are so many possibilities that it is like a knot that needs to be tied, untied and tied back together. If it is treated as a top priority, the process should take at least a year or year and a half. The infrastructure considerations are necessary because of the 17 major intersections impacted by this area half are controlled by CALTRANS. The other half is city-owned. These lights are not coordinated, and so they remain out of sync. Also, residents are “prisoners” of the bridges, which place large limitations on what can be done there.

Kristen Engelbrecht spoke next. She said that the wetlands are really special, and she grew up being able to enjoy the open space. She hopes that she will still be able to enjoy the view when she establishes a family in Long Beach.

Harley Deer, a Spinnaker Bay resident, stated that he has lived in Long Beach for about 40 years. He believes that there can be a middle ground met. At Spinnaker Bay, there is a wetlands area at the end of his property. It was a miserable place, and they have done a nice job of cleaning it up that the residents can now enjoy it. This area brings other people to the neighborhood to enjoy it as well. Mr. Deer is bothered by the waste, petroleum, and pollution. When he first came to Long Beach, sulfur fuel was being released from the tanks. Now there is natural gas, and Mr. Deer believes that the tanks are no longer necessary. He suggested that if anything is developed on the site, let it be something that the residents need. According to him, a small commercial project better than making it a truck terminal, oversized commercial development, or what exists now.

Bret Boeddinghaus said that everyone keeps talking about how the City needs money. He wanted to know at what cost. As a businessman he understands the concept of money and expansion costs. But he does not understand digging up polluted land in a community full of homes with children and elderly. He suggested that if people want to do something

good with the land, they should develop it into the wetlands that it was meant to be. He added that anyone who wants to see the fiscal impact of Home Depot should take a copy of the Yellow Pages and open it to the hardware section to see all the local owners that have lost business due to development like this. Mr. Boeddinghaus believes that the EIR was a joke. He stated that the port of Long Beach is the highest producer of carcinogenics, and now the City wants to “pull more up and expose all these people and children to it.”

C.J. Hentzen, resident of Island Village, added that last winter was incredible. He drove down 2nd Street everyday and tried to tell the birds that it is not wetlands, but they don't want to leave. Believes that restoring the wetlands sounds complicated, and it is. But there isn't a whole lot that needs to be done, really. He asked, “How can Huntington Beach, a little area, do this?” He is not a naturalist and is tired of hearing from “tree huggers.” But he loves the open space. A lady at a past meeting said “can't we just buy the land? We'll hawk our houses to do it!” It was done for the Golden Gate Bridge.

Richard, an owner in Belmont Heights, found it interesting to know that the group was meeting that night in a school auditorium because he remembered reading an article in the L.A. Times about parks. The article included a study showing that more than 1.5 million children in L.A. County do not live within walking distance to a park. Based on this information, he said that he is in favor of any proposal that promotes more open space.

Phil Barroca asked if the possibility of restoring the Home Depot site to wetlands had been completely ruled out? With all this talk of lack of open space in LA County, there has to be some assistance opportunities for the remediation. Janice Dahl told the group that restoration was one of the study group's suggestions.

Vinnie Logato (sp?) has lived in Long Beach since 1969. He wanted to know what the population density of Long Beach compared to neighboring South Bay cities? He also wanted to know what the California Coastal Commission had to say about this mess? Lastly, how many Home Depot sites do we have in a 5-mile radius of the proposed site? The last time he visited a Lowe's it looked like it was going out of business.

Charles Supple has lived in Naples since 1994, and he was on Planning Commission in Manhattan Beach a while back. At that time, the Commission took consideration of studying 60 acres belonging to El Segundo that was used as a tank farm. He told the group that the whole project took a year and a half to complete. The biggest single issue was

the dirt. Therefore, considering the “rotten soil” over on the Home Depot site would be extremely important and he can’t imagine overlooking that.

Norm Ryan is an elected official of the Water District. He had no intentions of speaking and did not want to add to answers, but he does have questions. According to Mr. Ryan, on the land behind the tank farm they are digging about 100 feet below the property, and mixing clay and gravel to make a wall underneath. He doesn’t know how a federal grant allowed this work to be completed without an EIR. He suggested checking with the Orange County Water Department to see what information is available. Mr. Trent said that he would get in touch so that they can compare their maps and see if it is a former burn site.

Steve McCord of Belmont Shore Mobile Estates said that he feels proud to be a resident of Long Beach after hearing all of the effort that is being put into the area. He hadn’t heard all of the economic value of a wetland, only those benefits of the Home Depot. He suggested that the group consider things that one can’t really put a price tag on. He said that he works with children, and it breaks his heart to see children suffering from anxiety attacks and other issues that are much too much for them to handle. He stood at El Dorado Nature Center and saw the children’s faces when they were around wildlife and nature. So many children spend more time sitting in front of a television or video game, that they have become disconnected with the real world. He is proud to hear all of the great ideas for a more sensible use of this property. He believes that they need open space for adults and children to maintain sanity from living in the city.

Mark Bixby lives in University Park. He is not a member of the famous property-owning Bixby family. He is fully in favor of open space. He has heard the emotion, and recognizes that this is an emotional issue. Believes that they need to work together to purchase the site if they want wetlands there. The property owners still need compensation. He is a “water person,” and has been a surfing and water sports fan for a long time. He has experienced driving on Loynes Avenue, and stated that it has always been a problem because people are always going to drive recklessly. He believes that after several accidents, the City has done a good job of fixing it. However, closing or widening it wouldn’t make sense because the street is way below capacity. Therefore, Loynes is really a non-issue because most of the people who lose their lives were speeding and being reckless. He is concerned with the traffic impacts of Home Depot, but believes that most of these can be mitigated. He fully sympathizes with people that worry about access into their neighborhood, but wants everyone to recognize that there are worse alternatives. The residents do not want industrial, yet that is the permitted use according to the current zoning. He doesn’t recommend a moratorium because the

applicant would sue the City, and rightfully so. Because the applicant is following the proper entitlement process, residents should to consider alternatives. He is in favor of some commercial development on site, and doesn't believe that this is a wetlands property; it's just in the vicinity. The project will dramatically enhance the area, and the property values will not decrease. The property values will probably increase due to the additional services being available after the construction.

Doug Otto has been a resident for many years and is legal council for the applicant. (Note: Mr. Otto has been retained as legal counsel for Home Depot). He said that he has "cut his teeth" by writing the last transportation element years ago. He served on Planning Commission for 8 years and was Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee. He just finished with the Master Plan for the Aquarium and worked on that board. He has tons of experience with the planning process. He explained to the crowd that the study group is a recommending body for the City Council, who has the actual vote. He is sympathetic with the concept of studying SEADIP further because it is not as "tortured" a task as some make it seem. There is a plan for the City, and as soon as they get passed, there's guaranteed to be some people who will want to change that. SEADIP can be reviewed, as most plans can. But Mr. Otto believes that there is a whole other thing going on. The EIR process for Home Depot has been going on for the last 13 months. He does not believe that changing SEADIP will affect the Home Depot process. He encourages people to be active in the Home Depot review because that is the way the planning process works. He said that it is a good process, and the way things should be done because everyone is given the opportunity to weight in on the issues and get feedback. For years he has heard people say that Area 19 of SEADIP will never be used as a wetlands. A desalination plant was proposed, but would be impossible if the wetlands were restored. He added that buying the tanks would cost the City roughly \$50 million.

Sally Miller lives near the greenbelt, and has lived in Long Beach since she was 7 years old. Her children were raised here. She enjoys the view from her backyard and does not want to see a Home Depot.

Don Schubert is a resident of University Park who is strongly opposed to Home Depot for several reasons. The first is that Loynes is like a roller coaster, and he drives 20 miles per hour just to avoid motion sickness. He doesn't want to see any more traffic there. He thinks that having Home Depot there will create more traffic and pollution. Secondly, he doesn't want to inhale the dirty air that will result from digging up the dirt. He believes that in District 3 there is enough money available to buy the land and compensate the current owner(s).

Mary Parcel lives in 4th District and doesn't consider this to be just a 3rd District issue. She is a bird watcher by hobby, and wanted to inform the group that the area has been designated biologically as an important bird area. It is tied into another environmentally sensitive area, not just Long Beach. The California Coastal Conservancy has been trying to negotiate the purchase of this land, so there is hope.

V. Closing

Mr. Trent closed the meeting by mentioning the Boeing industrial park being proposed in Seal Beach. He suggested that people drive by to take a look at that site, which is not considered in the EIR. He then thanked everyone for coming and offering input. Those who signed in will receive a copy of the final report by the study group.

VI. Written Comments

- *Blake MacIntosh*: The exit of 7th Street at Studebaker going west was only one legal entrance to College Park West, which is located in Seal Beach. It is currently a very dangerous intersection which my 93 year old neighbor must navigate everyday. It is illegal to enter this neighborhood any other way during permit hours. This proposal would make a dangerous situation even worse.
- *Eileen Ryan*: L.B. has consistently won national awards for parks and recreation. Future plans for our area should not lose sight of our reputation, rather should enhance it. Los Cerritos Wetlands remediation is a must!
- *Eleanor Palmer*: With global warming and hurricanes New Orleans is suffering in part because they drained their wetlands for developers. Who knows what 50 or 100 years will bring to Long Beach in the form of natural disasters. Will we be ready, or be vulnerable?
- *Steven Blue*: I'm a realtor in Naples. I, and others from my office, would HATE to see the wetlands developed for commercial or residential use.
- *Linda Vizzini*: I'm concerned about preserving and restoring our wetlands, open space and the quality of life in Southern California and Long Beach area. I'm concerned about the light pollution, traffic, and toxic pollution that would accompany this development. In terms of traffic, please consider the impact of the Boeing Development going on now next to Island Village on Studebaker and Second Street to the Orange County line. The City has preserved Bluff Park, Sims Pond, and now it needs to preserve our wetlands! I would love to see no development but any should be ecologically friendly in terms of pollution (light and other), traffic, noise, etc. Let's reclaim our wetlands and develop them for eco-tourism. Do we need to start walking petitions? I'll volunteer!

- *Jan Arboit*: Pacific right-of-way was stopped by the people in Long Beach when they didn't want developers building condos—why can't we do the same?
- *Kerry Martin*: I am in favor of trying to preserve and restore as much of the Los Cerritos Wetlands area as possible as wetlands. Development is important but so is nature. In such an overwhelming urban environment every little bit of nature is so important, valuable, and helps keep us human. The wetlands that are already there is a pristine jewel and needs to be protected. Thanks.
- *Sherri Stuhl*: I appreciate the opportunity to listen to all views of the proposed project. I live in University Park Estates and I love my quiet little neighborhood. I drive in Beverly Hills, Hollywood, and Santa Monica everyday and I appreciate coming home to such a peaceful area. I am concerned with through traffic, more crime, accidents, noise and pollution. I look forward to coming home for a break.